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FOR INFORMATION

STATEMENT OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTEE ON UNICEF TO THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD AT ITS 1996 ANNUAL SESSION, 17-21 JUNE 1996

1. A shared vision and concern for children's rights translated into action for the survival, protection and development of children has been the basis for UNICEF/non-governmental organization (NGO) relations since the founding of UNICEF in 1946. The review of these relations within the now completed management excellence project should lead us to a strengthened partnership based on mutual respect and the complementarity of our respective roles and competencies.

2. At the third regular session of the Executive Board in 1995, the NGO Committee presented a number of suggestions concerning NGO involvement in policy formulation and programme planning at UNICEF headquarters as well as in the field. Given the potential and contribution of civil society in terms of financial resources, expertise and close links to children and communities at the grass-roots level, UNICEF policies, emergency assistance and regular programme assistance stand to benefit substantially from closer consulting mechanisms and partnership with NGOs. We believe that a mutually satisfactory consultative process should be devised and that it should include regular thematic UNICEF/NGO dialogue.

3. At the country level, the NGO Committee on UNICEF proposed increased and systematic participation of relevant NGOs in the programme progress, from the preparation of the situation analyses to the planning and implementation of the country programmes. While this is already common practice in a number of countries, it is not yet standard practice in all.

4. Some examples of successful UNICEF/NGO collaboration occurred during the past few months, and among them the exemplary joint efforts of the NGO Rights of the Child Caucus and UNICEF in preparation for, and during, HABITAT II which resulted in the insertion of significant child-related texts in the HABITAT agenda. Further collaboration took place at the well-received NGO Committee workshop at the NGO Forum running parallel to the conference in Istanbul. Both activities were made possible by a grant from the Government of Norway to whom the Committee wishes to express its profound gratitude.

5. At the regional level, the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office is joining hands with NGOs and the NGO Committee to tackle the intractable issue of the non-registration of children in nine countries of the subregion. This timely and urgently needed project spanning 10 to 12 months is about to start owing to a grant from the Government of Switzerland to whom the Committee is deeply grateful for its generosity and confidence. A complementary grant is still needed.

6. Further UNICEF/NGO collaboration has taken place in a number of other fields such as the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, the World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the Study on Reaching the Poorest. Collaboration with the Swiss Committee for UNICEF is under way for a week of promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF in all government primary schools of Geneva this coming November during the year of the fiftieth anniversary of UNICEF.

7. While the above-mentioned instances of successful UNICEF/NGO collaboration are far from unique, we believe that a true partnership requires a more systematic approach. We, therefore, request UNICEF to institutionalize NGO consultation and to put in place to this end the required mechanisms at UNICEF headquarters as well as in the field. The NGO Committee on UNICEF is convinced that nothing short of these measures can ensure the needed effectiveness of our collaborative efforts towards a more humane, just and peaceful environment in which children can look forward to a better future.

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STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC CHILD BUREAU ON BEHALF OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTEE ON UNICEF, WORKING GROUPS ON CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN, IN SUPPORT OF A REVIEW OF UNICEF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ON CHILD PROTECTION

1. We strongly support the review of UNICEF policies and strategies on child protection and urge the UNICEF Executive Board to adopt the draft recommendations on the implementation of special protection measures of children.

2. The review of UNICEF policies and strategies on child protection comes at a critical juncture. During the last decade, UNICEF estimates that 2 million children have been killed as a result of armed conflict, 4 million to 5 million have been disabled, 12 million were left homeless, more than 1 million have been orphaned or separated from their parents, and 10 million have been psychologically traumatized. The International Labour Organisation estimates that 200 million children are exploited by child labour and the World Health Organization estimates that 150 million children suffer from some form of childhood disabilities. In view of the complexity of all these issues, it will be difficult to make an impact without the concerted effort of the different parties from a multidimensional and multisectoral approach that calls for action.

3. Yet, for the first time in history, there is an international legally binding document - the Convention on the Rights of the Child - which calls on Governments to make provisions for the survival, protection and development of children.

4. We welcome the current review, which is a progression from the 1986 UNICEF policy paper on children in especially difficult circumstance, in so far as it analyses the systemic causes of all forms of exploitation, abuse or neglect of children.

5. We would like to call your attention to the following particularly noteworthy points:

(a) The proposed strategy moves beyond the traditional concept of children in especially difficult circumstance, focusing on hardship situations and circumstances rather than specific categories of children. Consequently, the strategy provides a framework for addressing all such situations as appropriate, including flagrant violations of children's rights;

(b) The strategy adopts the concept of "special protection measures" developed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child;

(c) The strategy establishes a most welcome agenda for close partnerships with civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It recognizes the value of full community participation in our ongoing work addressing child protection issues.

6. We would like to encourage the UNICEF Executive Board to recommend that UNICEF give specific attention to children affected by the following circumstances:

(a) Those children who are targets of organized violence;

(b) The unmet psycho-social needs of children;

(c) The needs of girls concerning physical violence, early marriage and sexual mutilation.

7. Noting the draft recommendation that UNICEF enhance its capacities to give a higher profile within UNICEF programmes to the protection of children, we would like to recommend the following:

(a) That UNICEF draw from NGO field experiences, studies and resources which promote the protective factors within a family environment which contributes to child resilience;

(b) That UNICEF, in partnership with Governments and civil society, and through capacity-building, strengthen child protection strategies;

(c) That UNICEF recognize the need for sustained social mobilization and awareness-raising campaigns which accompany all programmes at the community level in the area of child protection;

(d) That UNICEF develop a strategy for strengthening its partnerships with civil society in the area of child protection;

(e) That UNICEF, in partnership with Governments and NGOs, devise monitoring mechanisms to follow-up on the impact of child protection strategies.